

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**UWI Centre for Marine Sciences gets US\$100,000 from Airport Improvement Funds (AIF)
for Mangrove Research**

Montego Bay, Jamaica, 21 September 2023//

MBJ Airports Limited (MBJ), Airports Authority of Jamaica (AAJ), in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport presented One Hundred Thousand United States Dollars (US\$100,000.00) to The University of the West Indies (UWI) Centre for Marine Sciences for mangrove research at a handover ceremony on Tuesday, September 19, 2023. The event was held at the Discovery Bay Marine Laboratory in St. Ann.

Shane Munroe, CEO of MBJ Airports Limited, operators of the Sangster International Airport, expressed the organization's commitment to supporting the preservation of mangroves within the airport lands. This monetary contribution from the Airport Improvement Fund (AIF) aims to support scientific studies and research initiatives that will facilitate the careful management and preservation of the island's mangrove areas.

Munroe underscored the paramount importance of sustainability in MBJ's mission statement, with the objective being balancing airport developmental goals with protecting the natural environment and seeking to align the organization's undertakings with sustainable development principles.

"At present, we actively manage various ponds, wetlands, and mangroves on our airport grounds. As part of our ongoing commitment, we have initiated a wetland conservation project that emphasizes the preservation and conservation of portions of existing wetlands," said Munroe.

As part of a compensation plan for mangroves impacted by the recently completed Runway Extension and Associated Works project, MBJ has allocated 8 ½ acres of the Chatham Pond mangrove wetlands, located to the west of the airport, as conservation lands. This initiative to designate sections of the mangrove forest within the Chatam Pond area as conservation lands is expected to yield ecological and social benefits for Montego Bay, including the provision of a cleaner and less disturbed bird habitat, as well as the preservation of wetland fauna.

"We believe in a mutually dependent airport-community relationship, a symbiosis that demonstrates how development can harmonize with sustainability. Our commitment to extending the runway and enhancing safety measures today is matched by our dedication to preserving opportunities for future generations," said Munroe.

"This donation of US\$100,000 to the University of the West Indies Centre for Marine Science signifies our dedication to mitigate the environmental impact caused by the airport's expansion activities. We are committed to assisting in the scientific study and research necessary for the rehabilitation of the mangrove ecosystem," said Munroe.



Audley Deidrick, President and CEO of the Airports Authority of Jamaica explained that the team worked closely with the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) to ensure full compliance with environmental laws and regulations, including protection, mitigation, to include sustainable development practices to minimize the impact on the natural environment and to ensure compliance with necessary compensation plans, of which this donation forms part.

In 2016, MBJ signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the AAJ for the purpose of extending the airport's runway. This project is funded by the Airport Improvement Fee (AIF) which levied by the Government of Jamaica on departing passengers in accordance with the Airports Economic Regulations Act. In August 2018, the Cabinet of the Government of Jamaica provided approval for the Project, and the use of the AIF as Project funding. These fees are specifically designated to support capital programmes at Sangster International Airport and Norman Manley International Airport, where they are collected. The total budget for the Runway Extension project is US\$70 million.

Professor Dale Webber, Director, UWI Centre for Marine Sciences expressed gratitude to the MBJ team for their invaluable contributions.

“We would like to thank MBJ and AAJ for the contribution, for the dedication, but most of all for the vision in this decision to support research. This collaboration has enabled two forward-thinking institutions to grow, make meaningful commitments, and invest the necessary time to bring about positive change,” said Webber.

The donation will be directed toward acquiring a Carbon Hydrogen Nitrogen Analyser (CHN) for research purposes. “This CHN analyser will efficiently assess carbon content in plants and soil across multiple locations, significantly expediting decision-making and predictions,” explained Webber.

The Discovery Bay Marine Laboratory holds a unique historical significance as the birthplace of scuba diving in the Caribbean. One of its most significant contributions lies in mangrove restoration and conservation. The Marine Laboratory maintains a mangrove nursery, recognizing the vital role of mangroves in protecting coastlines.

“We must protect and conserve our mangroves. Currently, Jamaica is losing 1.2% per year, therefore it is a part of our mission to replant, conserve the mangroves,” said Webber.

These mangroves serve as a natural barrier, safeguarding the island coastline, including such areas under the jurisdiction of AAJ-operated airports. They act as effective filters, reducing the influx of pollutants into the marine environment and enhancing eco-tourism opportunities.

The UWI Centre for Marine Sciences (CMS) is dedicated to conducting and facilitating research in the marine environments of Jamaica and the broader Caribbean region. Their work focuses on studying the presence and status of coastal and marine species and resources. Furthermore, the Centre serves as a reliable source of environmental guidance for both governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations.





Shane Munroe (left), CEO of MBJ Airports Limited presents the symbolic cheque of US\$100,000 to Professor Dale Webber (right), Director of The University of the West Indies (UWI) Centre for Marine Sciences at a handover ceremony on Tuesday, September 19, 2023. Also present is Mr. Audley Deidrick, President & CEO Airports Authority of Jamaica.

About Sangster International Airport:

Sangster International Airport (IATA: MBJ, ICAO: MKJS) is an international airport located 3 mi (4.8 km) east of Montego Bay, Jamaica. The airport is capable of handling nine million passengers per year. It serves as the most popular airport for tourists visiting the north coast of Jamaica. The airport is named after former Jamaican Prime Minister Sir Donald Sangster.

About MBJ Airports Limited:

MBJ Airports Limited, the operator of Sangster International Airport, connects Jamaica to more than 60 international destinations. A record 4.7m passengers used the airport in 2019. MBJ operates SIA under a 30-year concession awarded in 2003 and the airport provides employment to more than 7,500 persons. SIA has been named the Caribbean’s Leading Airport by World Travel Awards for 14 years.

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